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New Strategic Plan for California Courts Meets Challenges of Changing Times

Plan Sets Six Goals for Future of State Court System

San Francisco—The Judicial Council today adopted a new long-range strategic plan that will guide the direction and future of the California judicial branch for the next six years. The plan was adopted by a unanimous vote of the council at a public meeting.

“The new strategic plan builds on past successes to meet the current and evolving challenges of delivering quality justice in a new era,” stated Chief Justice Ronald M. George, chairperson of the council, the policymaking body of state courts. “The plan affirms the council’s ongoing commitment to ensuring access and quality services for all Californians.”

The strategic plan has been shaped by contributions from more than 3,200 stakeholders in the judicial branch, including a wide array of judges, members of the public, community leaders, trial court staff, attorneys, and other justice system partners. The strategic plan’s goals are:

- **Access, Fairness, and Diversity:** California’s courts will treat everyone in a fair and just manner and all persons will have equal access to the courts.
- **Independence and Accountability:** The judiciary must maintain its status as an independent, separate, and equal branch of government. The independence of judicial decisionmaking will be protected to preserve the rule of law and ensure the fair, impartial, and efficient delivery of justice.
- **Modernization of Management and Administration:** Justice will be administered by a highly qualified judicial

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and executive leadership team in a fair, timely, efficient, and effective manner by using modern management practices.

- **Quality of Justice and Service to the Public:** The judicial branch will deliver the highest quality of justice and service to the public.
- **Education for Branchwide Professional Excellence:** High-quality education and professional development will be provided to enhance the ability of all individuals serving in the judicial branch to achieve high standards of professionalism, ethics, and performance.
- **Branchwide Infrastructure for Service Excellence:** The judicial branch will enhance the quality of justice by providing an administrative, technological, and physical infrastructure that supports and meets the needs of the public, the branch, and its justice system and community partners, and that ensures business continuity.

The strategic plan was based, in part, on the results of phase II of the Public Trust and Confidence assessment conducted earlier this year. Phase II captured the views of court users and judicial branch members who participated in focus groups. The report indicates that court users indicate that they hold generally high levels of confidence in the state's courts and have an especially high regard for judges.

The top indicator of confidence is whether court procedures are perceived as fair. The report *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts, Phase II: Public Court Users and Judicial Branch Members Talk About the California Courts* is available online at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_37pubtrust.htm

As the next step, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the council's staff agency, will work with branch stakeholders and Judicial Council committees to develop an operational plan that will carry out the strategic plan's mission and goals. That plan will be presented to the council for its review next summer.

The complete plan, *Justice in Focus: The Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch, 2006-2012*, is available on the California Courts Web site at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/2_annual.htm. The goals and goal statements are attached.

Justice In Focus: Strategic Plan for California's Judicial Branch for Fiscal years 2006-2007 Through 2011-2012

Strategic Goals and Goal Statements

GOAL I: ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

California's courts will treat everyone in a fair and just manner. All persons will have equal access to the courts and court proceedings and programs. Court procedures will be fair and understandable to court users. Members of the judicial branch community will strive to understand and be responsive to the needs of court users from diverse cultural backgrounds. The makeup of California's judicial branch will reflect the diversity of the state's residents.

GOAL II: INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The judiciary must maintain its status as an independent, separate, and equal branch of government. The independence of judicial decisionmaking will be protected in order to preserve the rule of law and ensure the fair, impartial, and efficient delivery of justice. The judiciary will unify in its advocacy for resources and policies that support and protect independent and impartial judicial decisionmaking in accordance with the constitution and the law. The branch will maintain the highest standards of accountability for its use of public resources, and adherence to its statutory and constitutional mandates.

GOAL III: MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Justice will be administered by a highly qualified judicial and executive leadership team in a fair, timely, efficient, and effective manner by using modern management practices that implement and sustain innovative ideas and effective practices.

GOAL IV: QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

The judicial branch will deliver the highest quality of justice and service to the public. In order to remain responsive to the varying needs of diverse court users, the judicial branch will work with branch constituencies to better ascertain court user needs and priorities. The branch will also employ community outreach to provide information about the judicial branch to the public, and effect programs and strategies to ensure that court procedures and processes are fair and understandable.

GOAL V: EDUCATION FOR BRANCHWIDE PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

High-quality education and professional development will be provided to enhance the ability of all individuals serving in the judicial branch to achieve high standards of

professionalism, ethics, and performance. Judicial branch personnel will have access to the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of the public and to enhance trust and confidence in the courts.

GOAL VI: BRANCHWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The judicial branch will enhance the quality of justice by providing an administrative, technological, and physical infrastructure that supports and meets the needs of the public, the branch, and its justice system and community partners, and that ensures business continuity.